



Teachers Roles and Question Techniques in EFL Classroom

Ahmed Abdul Salam Ayash

AL- Iraqia University, College of Media

E-mail: ahmed.a.ias@aliraqia.edu.iq

Received: 22 Oct 2024; Received in revised form: 21 Nov 2024; Accepted: 28 Nov 2024; Available online: 02 Dec 2024

©2024 The Author(s). Published by Infogain Publication. This is an open-access article under the CC BY license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Abstract— *The current research investigates teachers roles and question techniques in the EFL classroom. The purpose of this research is to investigate whether a relationship exists between the roles of teachers and question techniques in EFL classrooms at AL-Iraqia University, and to determine whether there is a difference in the roles of male and female teachers. This research employs a questionnaire as its tool. The population of the present study covers EFL teachers (male and female) who teach English language in the college of media at Al-Iraqia University for the academic year 2023/2024. The research restricts its sample to EFL teachers, both male and female, who instruct undergraduate students. The results obtained in this research indicate that there is a significant relationship between teachers' roles and question techniques in EFL classrooms at Al-Iraqia University, and there is no substantial relationship between teachers' roles (male and female).*



Keywords— *EFL Classroom, Teachers' Roles, Question Techniques, Undergraduate Students, and Al-Iraqia University.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Teachers in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms play a vital role in molding student learning and shaping outcomes. This research investigates the delicate relationship between teacher roles and questioning within the context of EFL instruction at Al-Iraqia University. While the study covers both male and female educators, the focus is on discernment of patterns and differences that come into play when asking essential questions, which serve to engage students and get them thinking on a different level.

This research collects insights from EFL instructors at the College of Media through a structured questionnaire. The target population consists of instructors who are both male and female. Data collection took place during the 2023-2024 academic year. Findings indicate a significant relationship between the questioning techniques teachers use and the roles they occupy in the classroom, with both male and female teachers using them in similar ways. Overall, the research reveals several connections between the questioning techniques teachers use and specific

pedagogical dynamics, highlighting certain effective questioning characteristics that contribute to more beneficial pedagogical dynamics.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Teachers have utilized questions to stimulate thinking in the EFL classroom since Socrates, and possibly before that. Appropriate questions allow teachers and students to benefit from one another's experiences (Wood, 2001). Reviews of research findings on questioning reveal that it is an effective skill "to stimulate student interaction, thinking, and learning." Every day teachers ask dozens, even hundreds, of questions—thousands in a single year, over a million during a professional lifetime (Wragg, 2001, p.19). Questioning has been and is a dominant method of instruction in the classroom. Some say questioning is, in fact, the most important teaching technique in use today. The greatest attribute of questioning is that it stimulates thinking in the classroom (Filippone, 1998). In the classroom, teachers constantly engage students in teaching and learning activities. The question-and-answer session is one of the most crucial

sessions a teacher does during the teaching and learning process. In teaching, questioning is a crucial action.

Teachers can use questioning to assess historical knowledge by posing who, what, where, and when questions that require factual responses. The design also aims to stimulate students' thought processes. These kinds of inquiries must be carefully considered because they pertain to more serious issues, such as repercussions and the usage of how-and-why questions (Farrant, 1985). Teachers can practice a variety of questioning tactics and reinforce them in the question-and-answer session to motivate students and stimulate their thinking in the classroom. One of the most efficient strategies to get students interested in the lesson's delivery is to ask them questions. By asking questions, teachers can engage students in thinking about the class topic and receive feedback from them, demonstrating the impact of their teaching (Long, 1980).

Questioning tactics are significant because they can stimulate learning, improve students' thinking capability, lead to clear ideas, pique the imagination, and provide motivation to act. It is also one of the methods by which teachers assist students in more efficiently developing their knowledge.

When conducting teaching and learning sessions in the classroom, teachers must be aware that the quality of questions and questioning is one of the most important factors in determining the effectiveness and quality of their sessions.

1.2. Aims of the Research

The current research aims to identify:

1. The study investigates the correlation between the roles of teachers and their question techniques in EFL classrooms at Al Iraqia University.
2. Is there a correlation between the roles of male and female teachers?

1.3. Hypotheses of the Research

We put forward the following null hypotheses for verification:

1. There is no significant relationship between teachers' roles and question techniques. In EFL classrooms at Al Iraqi University.
2. There is no significant relationship between teachers' roles (male and female).

1.4. Limits of the Research

The present research is limited to:

1. The role of teachers and their questioning techniques.

2. Iraqi EFL teachers (male and female) who teach English language in the College of Education for Humanities at Al Iraqia University for the academic year 2023-2024.

The study only includes EFL teachers, both male and female, who instruct in the fourth year. The students' sample is limited to the year-morning study students in the English department.

1.5. Value of the Research

The present study's value can be expressed as follows:

1. It helps EFL curriculum designers and EFL methodologists to develop instructional materials.
2. It facilitates the role of teachers and aids students in easily and smoothly absorbing the structures and rules of English.

1.6. Definitions of the Basic Terms

A role is a function or part that is performed as a process, particularly in a specified operation. It refers to the effect of an experimental factor under controlled circumstances (Good, 1959).

Role: how someone or something is involved in an activity or situation and how much influence they have on it (Keeney, 1996)

Question techniques are a set of methods used by teachers when asking questions, such as wait time and bounce. Experienced teachers recognize the power of questions. When skillfully delivered, questions boost student engagement, improve understanding, and promote critical thinking.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Facilitating learning and engaging students in EFL (English as a foreign language) classrooms are the critical roles of the EFL teacher. Research shows that teachers serve not only as providers of necessary knowledge but also as query facilitators who create an environment that encourages active student participation in the learning process (Arends, 2011). In EFL contexts, where students may be unfamiliar with cultural norms and language use, the ability of teachers to employ effective questioning techniques becomes a necessity instead of an option.

2.1. Question Techniques in the Classroom

Teachers must play a major role in employing the correct tactics and abilities to question students in order to assist them in inspiring a high level of thinking. Teachers should notice any changes in the classroom and align these changes with the goals they aim to achieve in the teaching and learning process. Teachers therefore need to plan

carefully and take into account some of the following factors:

2.1.1. Attention

For classroom attention, asking questions is one of the best methods. The entire classroom must hear the question before inviting a student to respond. Before mentioning a student's name to answer the posed question, teachers should ask a question themselves. This ensures that all students concentrate on the posted questions. If the teacher mentions the student's name first, only that specific student will pay attention in class (Long, 1980).

Classroom teachers should always ask students, not just those who raise their hands. The behavior of students who raise their hands when asking a question in this situation should not influence the teacher.

Teachers frequently offer questions solely to students who raise their hands, ignoring students who do not. This is not conducive to effective teaching and learning. We should give equal attention and care to all students in the classroom.

Meanwhile, some students who are not paying attention will request that the teacher repeat the question. The teacher should not repeat the question when the student asks. If the teacher asks the same question over and over, the students are unlikely to pay attention; hence, the teacher should only ask the question once.

2.1.2. Voice

For a teacher, voice is one of the most significant communication instruments. When asking questions, teachers should ensure that their voices are clear and their tone is audible. Teachers should deliver the questions to the students in a clear and concise manner, anticipating their responses. This is critical in getting students to respond to a question (Long, 1980).

2.1.3. Pause

After presenting a question, the teacher should take a moment to look around the room and talk. Take note of the verbal signs that the learner is ready to react. After asking questions, give students time to consider their answers (Alsaqoff, 1983).

III. METHODOLOGY

This research uses a quantitative method to investigate how teachers' roles relate to their questioning techniques in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. More specifically, it looks at EFL instructors in the College of Media at Al-Iraqia University. A structured questionnaire was designed and administered to the instructors in the 2023-2024 academic year. The instrument had two main

sections: the first sought to identify the roles teachers play in the classroom (e.g., facilitator, guide, assessor), and the second assessed the types of questions instructors ask (e.g., knowledge-based, analytical, or evaluative) and the manner in which they ask them.

The population we aimed to include comprised both male and female EFL instructors teaching undergraduate students, specifically those in the last two years of their course. We sought to obtain a representative sample, and for this, we used stratified random sampling, which yielded our desired outcome with respect to the male-female ratio that characterizes EFL instructors at this university. The actual data-gathering process involved a mixed mode of electronically and directly distributing the questionnaire to the EFL instructors. We chose this method due to its proven ability to boost response rates.

We obtained quantitative data from the questionnaires and then analyzed them using various statistical methods. We employed descriptive statistics to summarize the demographic characteristics of our respondents and used inferential statistics to test the null hypotheses we had posited. We related these hypotheses to the constructs of our study, specifically focusing on the relationships between teachers' roles and their questioning techniques. Our main goal was to identify any significant differences in the two constructs mentioned above between male and female teachers that might give us some important pedagogical insights in our EFL classrooms.

3.1 Content of Questions

Before asking a question, a teacher should plan the types of questions they will ask in the classroom. In this situation, it may not be necessary to write these questions ahead of time, but it is crucial to construct the "axis question." Organize the axis questions logically to ensure class continuity. The teacher should ask questions like this during a lecture to ascertain the desired direction. Keep the length of these questions to a minimum (Long, 1980, p. 144).

When asking questions, teachers should also consider the students' ages and abilities. Teachers are already aware of a student's ability in a classroom. Therefore, when posing questions, teachers have the ability to pose challenging questions to students who are clever and gifted, while presenting simpler questions to those who are weaker. The simple questions posed to the weaker students will enable them to answer the question, and this will motivate them and stimulate their thinking.

Teachers should also encourage students to ask questions with implicit answers. Teachers should also make sure question words are clear. Students will become confused if they cannot understand the words used in a question.

When students misunderstand a question, the teacher should clarify the question, allowing the student to respond first.

3.2 The Importance of Teachers' Asking Questions

The motivations behind teachers posing questions to their students in a classroom often diverge from those in casual conversations. In other words, classroom talk rules differ from others. We question students, not to obtain new knowledge for ourselves but to find out what they already know. Ausubel emphasizes this principle: "What the learner already knows is the most important single factor influencing learning" (Ausubel, 1968, p.2). Assimilate this knowledge and instruct the learner accordingly. Other reasons for asking questions are to stimulate recall, to deepen understanding, to develop imagination, and to encourage problem solving.

There are also classroom management-related questions, such as, 'Have you got your books?', in their first edition of the Sydney Micro Series, list eleven possible functions of questions.

The purpose is to stimulate interest and curiosity about a subject. The goal is to concentrate on a specific problem or idea. Develop an active approach to learning. We aim to encourage students to pose inquiries for both themselves and others. Organize a task to optimize learning. The goal is to identify the specific issues that are preventing students from learning. To communicate with the group that involvement in the lesson is expected and that overt participation by all members of the group is valued. To provide an opportunity for students to reflect upon information. We aim to engage students in an inferred cognitive process, believing that this will aid in the growth of their thinking abilities. To develop reflection and comment by students on the responses of other members of the group, both students and teachers (Wragg, 2001), aim to provide students with a chance to learn through discussion. Various models exist that neatly categorize question types. A favorite among teachers is the model below, which has five simple categories.

3.3 The Importance of students' Asking Questions

Children may ask a lot of questions, but not usually in school. Indeed, in one of Wragg's detailed analyses of questioning in twenty lessons, there were fewer than twenty questions asked spontaneously by students, and most of these questions were not centrally concerned with thinking (Wragg, 2001). Many of the questions students ask their teachers appear to be procedural, such as 'What time do we finish?' or 'Should we put the date?', rather than being related to the thinking processes involved in the

subject matter, such as 'Why is the sky blue?' or 'What happens if...?'

Ten teachers remember a testing or penetrating question asked by a student, but these sorts of questions do not occur frequently. Similarly, students often ask each other questions related to procedural or social matters rather than the subject content, unless their teacher explicitly encourages them to ask questions.

The well-known adage by Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget suggests that 'All logical thinking arises out of the manipulation of objects' could also apply to 'and the asking of questions'. In addition to procedures and subject matter, students may ask questions of the teacher or each other for various reasons. We should consider the students' attention, affection, and recognition of learning when they ask questions (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969, p.7).

3.4 Distribution of Questions

Teachers should pose inquiries to all students in the classroom. Teachers will ask questions to all students to encourage their participation in the teaching and learning process (Long, 1980). Teachers should also refrain from asking questions based on their students' sitting positions in the classroom. This is because students who are seated in the back and on the sides of the classroom are not paying attention during class. Therefore, we need to pose questions to all students to ensure their focus and participation.

In the meantime, teachers should be ready with questions. When students are conducting a study or project, teachers should refrain from asking questions. Teachers should constantly assist students in coming up with the right answers by pulling these answers out of them when asking questions and obtaining responses from them. In this way, students will think more deeply and attempt to answer the question (Alsagoff, 1983).

3.5 Levels of Questions

During teaching and learning activities, it is important to vary the levels of questioning. Benjamin S. Bloom divides the six levels of inquiries into the cognitive domain in his "Taxonomy of Education Objective (1956)". The process commences with recalling facts, marking the lowest level, and progresses to the most intricate and abstract levels, culminating in the ultimate evaluation level (Bloom, 1956). The six levels of questions are structured as follows:

3.5.1 Knowledge

Students can easily remember knowledge-based questions. Teachers should use these types of questions while introducing new topics or ideas to their students.

3.5.2 Understanding

After introducing students to a concept and knowledge, teachers should pose comprehensible questions. This implies that teaching and learning will occur within the context of comprehension or comprehension-related activities.

3.5.3 Application

The following components of the questions address how students use the provided information. The application questions aim to help students apply the knowledge they've gained in class.

3.5.4 Analysis

The analysis question differs from other types of questions in that it seeks to separate ideas. Teachers must exercise caution when presenting analytical questions to students at a higher level, ensuring they can comprehend the subject matter and apply all necessary skills.

3.5.5 Synthesis

Synthesis questions require students to generate a new idea based on the provided information. These abilities necessitate high-level talents, as teachers must guide children until they are able to synthesize knowledge.

3.5.6 Evaluation

Students will receive evaluation-based questions at the highest level. Evaluation requires students to formulate and sustain their justifications.

3.6 Other Categories of Questions

There are also other ways to categorize questions. It can be performed according to its main functions as follows:

Students will receive evaluation-based questions at the highest level. Evaluation requires students to formulate and sustain their justifications.

3.6.1 First-order Questions

The most often asked queries are of this nature. The sequential phrasing of this question aligns with the disclosure of information in the teaching and learning activities.

3.6.2 Uncovered Questions

Uncovered questions are a type of question that has the potential to gradually expand students' knowledge. This technique also requires teachers to tackle creative, clear, and straightforward questions so that students do not get bored.

3.6.3 Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions are a form of independent inquiry that seeks to assess students' abilities and knowledge. Additionally, students may pose alternative questions to

the teacher in order to seek further clarification and certainty. Teachers expect this kind of response to gauge students' understanding.

3.6.4 Divergent Questions

Divergent questions can stimulate a wide range of thinking abilities in students. Subjective questions aid students in expanding their thinking horizons, a crucial step toward enhancing their cognitive abilities (Bloom, 1956).

3.7 Population and Sampling

According to Creswell (2012), a population is a group of individuals who share a common characteristic. For example, all teachers would make up the population of teachers, and all high school administrators in a school district would comprise the population of administrators. As these examples illustrate, populations can be small or large. Within this target population, the researcher then selects a sample for study.

A sample is a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study in order to make generalizations about the target population. Ideally, the researcher selects a sample of individuals who are representative of the entire population.

The population of the present study covers EFL teachers (male and female) who teach the English language in the College of Education for Humanities at Al-Iraqia University for the academic year 2023-2024.

Only male and female EFL teachers who teach the fourth year make up the study's sample. The students' sample is limited to the fourth-year morning study students in the English department.

There are a total of 30 teachers who teach English. The sample includes 10 teachers, which represent 33% of the population. We randomly selected teachers with experiences ranging from 1 year to 20 years.

3.8 Constructing the Instrument of the Research

It is crucial to collect information about questions and techniques from teachers in a systematic manner, as this ensures the rationality of educational decisions and judgments (Hughes, 1996). Therefore, this research employs a questionnaire as its primary research instrument.

3.9 The Questionnaire

A questionnaire is one of the most widely used tools to collect data, especially in social science research. The main objective of questionnaires in research is to obtain relevant information in the most reliable and valid manner.

We have constructed a 10-item questionnaire for teachers who teach and are interested in the intended textbook.

IV. THE VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Validity elucidates the extent to which the collected data encompasses the actual area of investigation "Measure what you intend to measure" is the essence of validity (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005, p.92).

4.1 Face Validity

Creswell (2012) characterizes face validity as the extent to which individuals involved in education, like test takers, teachers, supervisors, etc., perceive a measure's relationship to a specific construct. That is, a measurement tool has face validity if its content simply looks relevant to the person taking the test or answering the questionnaire. It evaluates the appearance of the questionnaire and test in terms of feasibility, readability, consistency of style and formatting, and the clarity of the language used. We submitted both study instruments to a jury of teachers and ELT methodology specialists to ensure their validity. After reviewing the instruments, the jurors declared them appropriate and valid, considering a few comments and modifications before preparing the final forms of the instruments.

4.2 Content Validity

Content validity pertains to the extent to which a test accurately measures the intended characteristics or abilities. It verifies whether the test accurately measures the intended characteristic or ability.

Weir (1990) views content validity as the process of determining the degree to which the test tasks accurately reflect the tasks under examination. Put simply, content validity involves a methodical examination of the test's content to confirm its alignment with the material and the targeted behaviors for measurement.

4.3 Reliability of the Questionnaire

We conclude the reliability of the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha formula, a statistical measure of internal consistency. It gauges the degree of correlation between a set of items. Cronbach's Coefficient value ranges between 0 and 1. It increases as the correlation between the items increases (Streiner and Norman, 1989, p. 64). The statistically obtained results show that the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire is 19.0.

4.4 Pilot Administration of the Questionnaire

To conduct a pilot administration of the questionnaire, we have selected a group of three teachers. We selected the pilot sample teachers from the entire population, not just the basic sample of the study. The results have shown that

all the items are clear and understood enough, and the time needed ranges from 35 to 40 minutes.

4.5 Scoring Scheme of the Questionnaire

A Likert scale is adopted in which the respondents express their level of agreement concerning each item in the following three-point scale: Agree 3, partially agree = 2, disagree = 1.

4.6 Final Administration of the Questionnaire

The final administration of the questionnaire took place from June 16 to June 28, 2023. We informed the respondents about the purpose of the questionnaire and the overall goal of the study. Each one of the respondents has filled out his/her copy thoroughly.

V. RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The following results are obtained:

1. There is a significant relationship between teachers' roles and question techniques. In EFL classrooms at Iraqi University.
2. There is no significant relationship between teachers' roles (male and female).

We constructed the questionnaire to assess the extent to which question techniques meet the stated criteria. We analyzed the questionnaire results from the involved teachers and summarized them as follows:

1. The arrangement, design, and size of the prescribed questions are satisfactory.
2. The activities associated with the use of different questions adapt so they can be fully utilized.
3. Teachers' perspectives on their ability to teach have not been uniform. However, results show that the prescribed question techniques help teachers to best utilize their time.
4. The teachers have highly evaluated the prescribed question's content. In general, the materials within the content are motivating, explicit, and challenging.

VI. CONCLUSION

Questioning in teaching and learning sessions is one of the most important aspects of mastering knowledge. Teachers should focus on questioning techniques in the teaching and learning process to encourage students' interest and attention in learning. Questioning techniques increase motivation and promote students' ability to think critically and creatively.

Furthermore, these techniques help students engage actively in the teaching and learning process and stimulate the mastery of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS).

Through questioning techniques, teachers are able to explain important content so that students can understand and enable them to develop their thinking to a higher level. Therefore, questioning techniques need attention from educators in order to produce students who can compete globally.

REFERENCES

- [1] Alsagoff, S. A. (1983). *Educational science: Pedagogy*. Heinemann Asia.
- [2] Arends, R. (2011). *Learning to teach*. McGraw Hill.
- [3] Ausubel, D. P. (1968). *Educational psychology: A cognitive view*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- [4] Bloom, B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals. Handbook I: Cognitive domain*. Longmans, Green.
- [5] Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research*. Pearson Education.
- [6] Farrant, J. (1985). *A dictionary of research methodology and statistics in applied linguistics*. Rahnam Press.
- [7] Filippone, R. (1998). *English grammar in the classroom*. Cambridge University Press.
- [8] Ghauri, P., & Gronhaug, K. (2005). *Research methods in business studies* (3rd ed.). Financial Times Prentice Hall.
- [9] Good, C. V. (1959). *Dictionary of education*. McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc.
- [10] Hughes, A. (1996). *Testing for language teachers*. Cambridge University Press.
- [11] Keeney, R. L. (1996). The role of values in risk management. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 3, 126-134.
- [12] Long, A. (1980). *Pedagogy: General teaching methods*. Fajar Bakti.
- [13] Piaget, J., & Inhelder, B. (1969). *The psychology of the child*. Basic Books.
- [14] Streiner, D. L., & Norman, G. R. (1989). *Health measurement scales: A practical guide to their development and use* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- [15] Weir, C. J. (1990). *Understanding and developing tests*. Oxford University Press.
- [16] Wood, C. (2001). *Questions research*. Pearson Education.
- [17] Wragg, E. C. (2001). *Question techniques*. Cambridge University Press.